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ABSTRACT

This book presents an overview of the problems facing rural America and offers solutions at the national, state, and local levels. The combination of public lack of awareness and metropolitan-centered authority has created a view of rural America and its people that is contrary to both the data and actual living conditions. Rural education has been plagued primarily by limited financial resources. The needs in rural areas are national in scope and therefore require national solutions. Some possible solutions are: (1) to encourage local congressmen and U.S. senators to join congressional rural organizations; (2) to establish a presidentially-appointed blue ribbon committee to study the problems of rural America; (3) to establish a cabinet-level post for rural affairs; (4) to establish a national scholarship program for teachers to teach in rural areas; (5) to provide research grants to study rural problems; (6) to gather the captains of industry to listen to the advantages of investing in rural America; and (7) to create a national rural leadership center. State efforts could include: (1) entrepreneurship programs; (2) regional cooperation; (3) equalization of school resources; (4) research on effective rural schools; (5) distance education; and (6) school-based enterprises. Local efforts could include community-school collaboration and business-education partnerships. The book contains a bibliography of 30 references. (KS)

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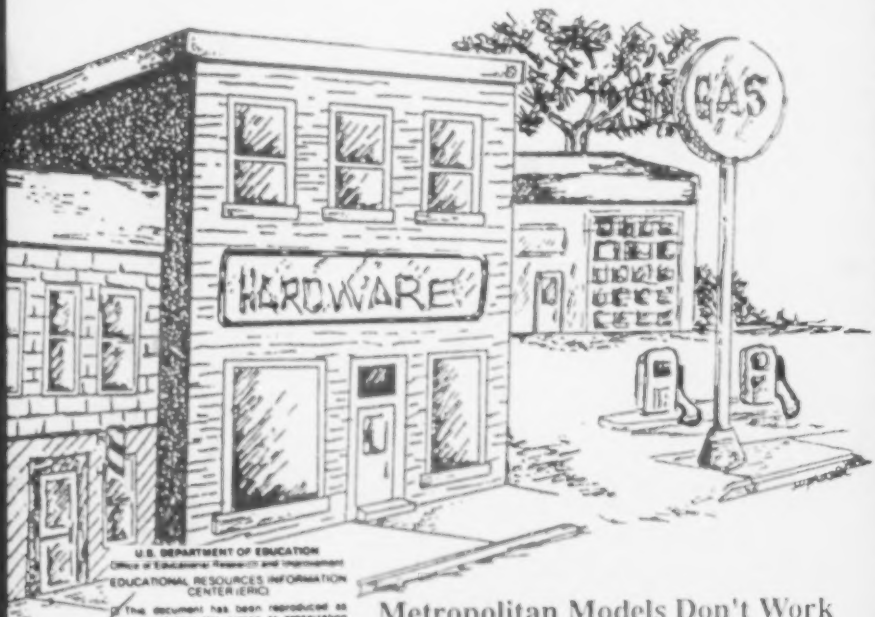

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Metropolitan Models Don't Work for Rural People

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There Are No Subways in Lickingville

Metropolitan Models Don't Work for Rural People

Arnold Hillman, D.Ed.

A Riverview Intermediate Unit Publication

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Prologue

We now live in a global village, where events in one corner of the world impact on the entire planet. The concept of local self interest is long past. When one segment of our populace is dying a slow and agonizing death, it will soon spread and affect us all. We cannot let rural America become a ward of our economically healthy and thriving metropolitan areas. The creation of a rural "welfare state" in our midst will become a weight that we will not be able to bear.

We need to be able, some day, to look each other in the eye and say that Jonathan Sher's statement, **"Improving the lives and futures of rural youths is not a national priority"** is not so anymore.

The United States "is in the midst of a coast-to-coast, border to border collapse of much of its rural economy", (Charlier, *Wall Street Journal*) affecting roughly a quarter of the nation's population.

> Involving much more than agriculture, this collapse of large chunks of nonmetropolitan America reached from fishing and cannery towns like Eastport, Maine, all the way to rural California's mining and timber counties, over a dozen of which had double-digit unemployment rates in 1988. The coasts had rural and small-town backwaters, too–just fewer of them. Weak commodities prices were an explanation, but so were the new global wage differentials of the 1980's. Cheap, willing, rural nonunion American labor was no longer cheap enough. (Phillips:200)

Demography and Dogma

What are Rural Schools?

If I might borrow Jonathan Sher's analogy of the parable of the blind men and the elephant (Sher:1)? After the blind men describe the various portions of the beast's corpus, the taciturn and speechless mastodon gazes over the limitless fields and mountains of its homeland. The elephant cannot discourse on itself. Had it the power of speech, the blind men would not recognize it as a sentient being. Even if it were taken at its word, the wise folk would not consider its view as one worthy of consideration. How can one expect a salient opinion from an object of study? Further, since there are fewer elephants than wise men, how would a fair vote be taken to consider the truth of what an elephant might say?

The elephant considers its fate and chooses to be silent. The description of its structure is left to those who have neither sight nor experience. A definition of an elephant appears in learned journals that speaks to its disparate parts and not to the whole being. Sighted people, far from the elephant's home, read these votives and cluck over the many descriptions offered in the texts. They wax nostalgic about its various parts and grow to see the elephant as a storied character.

"Mark Twain said that he had no trouble giving up smoking. He had done it hundreds of times. So it is with the definition of the term 'rural.' It is constantly being done." (Kirkpatrick:1) There are as many definitions as there are people who care to describe the term.

The sad part of all these efforts is that portions of each definition are both true and false. Whether one uses the federal government's nine broad descriptions, or individual experts' views, more time is spent discussing the "term" than is warranted. An interesting research project might be to review the amount of literature given to descriptions of the terms urban or metropolitan.

Rural people, in the privacy of their own existences, poke fun at themselves and the "metropolitans" by creating their own definitions. "You know you are rural when movies come out on video cassette before they come to the local theater." "You can always tell city folks because they're the only ones in town wearing a spanking new John Deere hat (substitute Agway or Massey-Ferguson)."

"You know you are rural when movies come out on video cassette before they come to the local theater"

The plethora of lists of rural definitions has created an almost endless series of sinkholes for rural people. Those in the corridors of power, experts on education, economic development, social welfare programs, transportation, etc. either reside in metropolitan areas or have developed a "central office" mentality.

Government agencies, individual researchers and those who would help rural people, spend endless time trying to define rurality in terms of numbers, rather than deal with crucial rural issues. Mathews has stated that, "The key to the definition is not in numbers but in the relationship between people and the land."

(Mathews:1627) The result of this obsession with the term rural has obscured the need to view rural people as a distinct subset of the general American population. When rural people become part of a homogenous grouping they and their characteristics tend to get lost. When issues arise, they are very often placed in a whole population category with no need for special attention. New programs and fad remedies tend to forget that rural people may not be able to improve themselves because "...there are no subways in Lickingville."

Recently, education has seen its newest panacea spread from Minnesota to each shining sea. The door to choice has been opened to public school parents. Now families will be able to take tuition dollars from the state along with them when they enter their youngsters in a school of their choosing. The results of these options will force competition among the schools for the consumer's dollar. Second rate institutions will either close up or be forced to improve. Photographs are happily displayed in newspapers claiming victory for free choice, the entrepreneurial spirit, and democracy.

Have you wondered how youngsters are getting to the new schools? Are they now living with "discovered" relatives, or are they taking public transportation? As an example, how might Johnny Smith, age 6, get to another school of his family's choice? Johnny lives in a town of 400 people in the Johnston Consolidated School District. It covers a 1000 square mile area in central Kansas, or New York, or California or Pennsylvania. The nearest town to Johnny's is 25 miles away and Johnny already spends one hour and fifteen minutes on the bus, each way, getting to his own elementary school. How would Johnny's family affect the kind of choice that his metropolitan brothers and

sisters might have?

Johnny's family owns one battered car. There is no public transportation in the county and all of Johnny's relatives live in, or near, the town where he lives. These are the solutions to the problems of education as seen by the "authorities." These experts, both governmental and private, are not insincere people. However, when it comes to problems of rural people, they are sightless.

Our public, both rural and urban, are not aware of the ills of rural America.

Whether watching the evening news on a cable channel or a metropolitan station, the absence of news about rural people is startling. Larger television or radio stations may report isolated events or statistics for an individual place or the entire state, but rarely a complete story about rural America. The print media in large metropolitan areas cover a wide range of topics concerning their travails. However, small local papers cannot tell the story of the scope of rural America. Our public, both rural and urban, are not aware of the ills of rural America. The compilation of rural data, so common for metropolitan areas and reported by the media, is not generally available to either public. The lack of awareness creates an aura of placid acceptance of the worsening economy of rural people.

The combination of a lack of public awareness and metropolitan centered authority has created a view of rural America and its people which is contrary to either the data or actual living conditions. A rather classic misperception is that most rural people are engaged in

farming. According to census data, only 10% of non-metropolitan people are involved in that way of life. "Twenty-three percent of 3106 counties in this country can now be described as agriculture dependent, but more than three quarters of the counties are non-metropolitan in character." (Options: 6)

The 1980's have been a disastrous time for rural people. While the media decry problems of urban areas, rural areas and their plight go unnoticed. The following statements widen the eyes of the "experts" and bring on exclamations of disbelief at current rural vs. urban statistics of the late 80's.

1. Rural unemployment rates are higher
2. Rural per capita income averages 25% lower
3. Rural poverty is one-third higher
4. Rural school dropout rates are higher
5. Rural populations are older and require higher expenditures per capita for health care
6. Rural populations have a higher proportion of younger people requiring higher expenditures on education
7. A slower economic recovery in rural areas has resulted in a widening economic and social rural-urban gap

(Options: 6)

One of the conclusions of this policy development study was that per capita costs to deliver the same services for rural peoplewould be higher than identical services than in metropolitan areas.

How do we then tell the story of rural America, when the stereotypes are so ingrained in the American mind? Rural people have many times been described as "quaint". We live out in the "sticks," the "boondocks,"

"out in the middle of nowhere," "hoopyville." Are any of these terms positive? Cosby and Charner describe rural people as a minority.

Labels generally have a negative connotation...This is readily evident in the slang terms "hicks", "rednecks", "plowboys", "hillbillies"...

> Perhaps the strongest argument for a rural minority lies in a linguistic contrast of slang terms used for rural and urban folk...the cultural characteristics...contained in the contrast may be seen as a dichotomy between urban=superior, and rural=inferior...This truth is evident in the nature of knowledge that the larger society has about rural folk. Just as other minorities are stereotyped by the larger society, knowledge about rural folk is remarkably stereotypical in nature. Labels generally have a negative connotation and represent our urban "put downs" of rural people in rural life. This is readily evident in the slang terms "hicks", "rednecks", "plow boys", "hillbillies", "crackers", "clodhoppers", and of course "good'ol boys" and "folk"... For those who feel that the notion of rural–urban difference is simply an artifact of the misguided imagination of a few sociologists, we challenge you to construct a comparable list of stereotypical terms for urban folk. (Cosby & Charner: 15-17)

Is it therefore true that rural America is not in the mainstream of society, or are the perceptions of the public mind, both rural and urban, confused by long held preju-

dices about non-metropolitan America? In the four policy development seminars held across the country in the latter part of 1988, rural experts in all fields, not experts from metropolitan areas on rural people, produced a rank order of critical issues for rural Americans and issues that needed additional resources. As you might expect with a flock of metropolitan experts, the nationwide rural group defined education as its highest priority. They believe, along with their urban counterparts, that investment in education will help people raise themselves by their own bootstraps.

The advent of mass culture through wide distribution of print media, whether *U.S.A. Today* or magazines, television through satellite dishes, or through the limited number of cable hookups in rural areas, has brought the Gulf Crisis, the end of the Cold War and the rebellion in Tianamen Square into rural homes. Rural youth have but to look at MTV to develop buying patterns the equal of their metropolitan cousins.

Placism is discrimination based upon where people happen to live.

Why then are rural areas on the bottom of the national priority list while at the same time being on the lowest rung of Maslow's hierarchy of needs? Jonathan Sher concludes that the answer to this unfairness may be the most insidious form of discrimination. "It certainly is true that along with racism and sexism there is another 'ism' we need to worry about: 'placism.' Placism is discrimination based upon where people happen to live. Such discrimination, even when inadvertent has had very negative effects on rural communities and rural schools." (Sher: 31)

Sher's statement appears to imply that one gets treated by those with authority, whether political or economic, in a place-dependent way. Recent cost containment policies in health care have put a severe burden on health facilities across our country. In the chief programs, Medicare and Medicaid, "Medicare pays urban hospitals much more than rural hospitals for providing the same services. Similarly, rural doctors are usually paid significantly less than urban doctors, despite the lack of any evidence documenting appreciably lower cost for rural practice. Federal policies, as a result, provide strong financial incentives for physicians to locate in urban areas." (Cordes:160) As a result of these policies, physician to population ratios in rural areas are a fraction of what they are in urban areas. Recruiting physicians, for some rural communities, is a full time job. A simple example of "placism" may result in lack of adequate health care which may then result in negative consequences for those who are ill. What more important distinction may be observed by this form of discrimination than the very existence of a human being?

Advancing the causes of rural people is not only halted by the wrangling over what rural is, and the negative stereotyping of rural people, but by the Norman Rockwell portraiture of small town life. The pristine beauty of our forests, our mountains, our swaying wheat fields and clear streams and rivers are a never ending picture emblazoned on the minds of Sierra Club members and teachers of literature. Our people are rosy-cheeked and bucolic, peppered with gap-toothed characters eager to buy band uniforms from Professor Harold Hill or guide you to the best fishing area in the United States of America. We have few problems with our communities, being people of the land, close to the Almighty, and quaint as all

get out. We exist on much less than "other" people. We are generally happy, healthy and well satisfied with our way of life.

Would that these descriptions were TRUE. The plain truth is that life in the non-metropolitan areas of the United States has been extremely difficult for many years and is worsening. "The prosperity of the 1970's (rural economy) is now seen as a temporary interruption of a long-term downward trend in the rural economy." (Reid:1) The creation of jobs in rural areas has not kept pace with those in metro areas. The fastest growing sectors of our national economy, the service area, has situated itself in large population centers where high tech industry resides. Despite the improvements in telecommunication, which would allow rural areas to compete, few industries of any magnitude move to rural areas.

As a consequence of these economic situations, rural areas are experiencing an outmigration of people greater than at any time in the 20th century. Non-metro areas are losing disproportionately large numbers of college graduates, whose net rate of outmigration was 2% (of the population) in the mid-1980's. That is, rural areas are losing their educated to the cities. This brain drain is further exacerbated by the limited number of youngsters from rural areas who go on to further education .

The vicious cycle of decline begins with a rural population, whose view of education may be as stereotypical as those who have a misguided view of rural people. Because of a narrow economic base relating to natural resources, agriculture or specific industries, education has not been a necessary tool for earning a decent wage. At a time when the coal, oil and natural gas business

was at its peak, a sixteen year old could leave school, get a driver's license and drive a coal truck for a salary almost double what his teacher might be making. The perception that rural economies have no need for college graduates finds a warm resting place among as many local residents as it does among the metropolitans who come as "tourists", or those who see rural people from afar. The current economy is seen as an aberration that will soon pass and that good paying jobs will then be as plentiful as before.

The relationship between post-secondary education and good jobs is further clouded by the traditional fear that going away to school will break up families. With the outmigration of young talented people, this is no idle form of paranoia. It is indeed true that the educated youngsters will quickly see that job opportunities back home are severely limited and that they will have to move to metropolitan areas to begin a career. "Education results in a more mobile population. As a result, local funds spent on education may result in some portion of the population moving out of the local community or even the state." (Hobbs, Heffernan, Tweeten: 179) Hobbs et al believe that the entire country benefits from this education and that funds should be made available to rural areas from federal coffers to compensate rural communities for the loss of their human resources.

Because of lower per capita incomes of rural people, post-secondary education becomes even more difficult to achieve. Although there are a myriad of federal and state programs established to help those with fewer resources, parents in rural families are confused by financial aid requirements or believe that the cost of college is prohibitive. At a time when private universities have raised their tuition to a point where only partial or full

scholarships enable middle and upper middle class students to attend, those with limited resources see the state university system as institutions that they can afford. However, rural people are sometimes not the recipients of a state's largesse because of limited enrollments, distances from such institutions, and a lack of counseling in their local high schools. Since rural (and in this case small) high schools usually present fewer academic options, few extracurricular activities and fewer opportunities for cultural aggrandizement, their academic records do not compare favorably with their metropolitan counterparts. Consequently, there may be equality in grades and SATS, but all of the other cohorts of high school life are limited. In a landmark study done for the Pennsylvania Higher Education System, even the state universities situated in rural areas were populated overwhelmingly by urban students. Out of 14 state university sites, 12 of which are situated in non-metro areas, only 4 had rural populations of over 10% in a state where the rural student population approaches 30%. The situation worsens when one looks at incoming freshman classes.

The compendium of problems in rural schools has been detailed in as many works as there exists on rural education. The listings are broad enough so that rural schools have problems attracting teachers. In general, rural schools are characterized by:

* low spending per student
* trouble attracting high school teachers in foreign languages, science and math
* too few counselors and administrators
* too much money spent on non-instructional expenses
* lack of variety in course offerings
* lack of enrichment

* lack of modern technology
* underfunded libraries
* buildings in need of repair
* too few special services

Since nearly two thirds of the over 16,000 school districts, nearly one half of all public schools and one third of all teachers exist is rural areas, one can see that those who dismiss rural educational problems as a minor wart on the body politic are less than conversant with the reality of the situation. The realities devolve on the socio-economic status of rural communities and place a heavy burden on those who work in the educational establishment.

Rural schools have a greater impact on the social and economic activities in their communities than do urban schools.

Yet rural schools have advantages, that if capitalized upon, can make a significant impact on the youngsters that they serve. Rural schools have a greater influence on the social and economic activities in their communities than do urban schools. In many cases the school district is the largest organization in town. We may not always be aware that school people are in the top 3 to 4% of the wage earners in the community. Although school people do not normally see themselves as "big wheels", they most often are. Rural educators have influence in their community in far greater proportions than they would imagine. In many rural communities, schools are the link to the outside world. Rural communities look to the schools for guidance and direction in many areas. They are important as the cultural and social centers of the community. One has only to be at the annual school play,

a concert, or a Friday night basketball game to observe this phenomena.

Rural schools are generally smaller. Across the nation, the one room school house still exists. While we have shrunken the number of school districts in a mock attempt at urbanization, from 128,000 in 1930 to over 16,000 in 1989, we have not understood how this consolidation has helped us. Many believe that the development of large and consolidated rural schools has even become less cost effective than the small independent district. The increasing per child costs in urban districts spurs taxpayer revolts and an almost endless barrage of anti-public education sentiment in the media and in the reform movements. Rural schools, their communities, and their teachers are generally more satisfied with their schools than their urban counterparts (Dunne:255). Translate their feelings as you will. Some have described this satisfaction as complacency, while others have seen this more even view of schools as a positive commitment to educating youngsters.

This disagreement strikes at the heart of a debate that may go on forever. Are rural communities unwilling or unable to mobilize their resources to work in concert with the education system to solve local problems? A discussion of this question permeates the soul of rural America.

Rural Education: Our Nation's Step Child

Lawrence Cremin, author of the recent book *Popular Education and Its Discontents*, offers interesting insights on how we got where we are. In *The Metropolitan Experience* 1876-1980, part three of a trilogy on American Education, he provides "... a comprehensive, scholarly account of the history of American education" (Cremin: IX). His first two volumes, *The Colonial Experience 1607-1783* and *The National Experience 1783-1876*, describe the development of American education from its Renaissance beginnings to an authentic American edifice by 1876. The third volume, however, departs from the global intentions of the first two tomes and "...carries the account to 1980, emphasizing the transformation and proliferation of educative institutions as the United States became a metropolitan society and explicating the role of those institutions in the export of American culture and civilization to other regions of the world." (Cremin:IX)

The choice made by Mr. Cremin in his third volume, to describe metropolitan education as the "American Way" for the past one hundred years, is a popular decision among those who write on educational topics. Even landmark works such as *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* , known as the Excellence Report, is almost solely a description of metropolitan education. One has only to review the backgrounds of the commission members, their current positions, their analyses and their recommendations to see that problems of rural schools have been left unattended. Although there are cross currents within all of the educa-

tion establishment, the huge minority of rural students would not be touched, helped or improved by many of the recommendations.

The lack of emphasis on rurality is a historic contradiction. The very basis of our educational system has been the small and rural school. The one room school house, where many of our country's leaders studied and thrived, was the beginning of it all. Even today, former Secretary of Education Terrell Bell recalls the joy and satisfaction of his early schooling in a small building where independent learning, non-gradedness, peer counseling, individual teacher help and flexible scheduling were the order of the day. The sight of mass produced education did not come into being until the latter part of the 19th century. Certainly, rural schooling was the rule until well into the 20th century.

Rural people have maintained their desire to be in control of their local schools.

Rural communities watched as school consolidation diminished its control over what was happening in their schools. The impetus for emulating the urban model came with the increasing need for further education, the diminution of the agrarian base, and a steady stream of educational reform from state agencies and finally from the federal bureaucracy. Rural people could only stand by and watch as the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Schools in rural areas that were meeting the increased demands of society were still seen by urban policymakers as unable to "keep up" with higher standards or novel educational methods.

Even today, in already consolidated districts with

two or three secondary schools, there is always a groundswell of opposition to eliminating a more local high school because of fiscal considerations. Rural people have maintained their desire to be in control of their local schools. At a time when most state agencies contribute more than 50% of a total school district revenue, there is fierce opposition to any move at further consolidation. In Pennsylvania, since 1965, when the last round of school consolidations took place, there has been successful resistance to further statewide consolidation. Any bill presented for consolidation is matched by a submission of bills by rural legislators to break apart large county wide school systems. The only successful consolidation in the state since 1965 has been in an urban area, for reasons of integration.

Rural educators have stood by and watched the encroaching metropolitan philosophical sprawl and have been unable to counter the obvious advantages of cost efficient, educationally advanced larger schools. That has been true until the late 1970's and 1980's. A departure from the former federal policy of disregarding small and rural schools in its decision making process occurred in 1983 with the announcement of a "Rural Education and Rural Family Education Policy for the 1980's." Secretary Terrell Bell announced that "Rural education shall receive an equitable share of the information, services, assistance and funds available from and through the Department of Education and its programs."

The significance of this statement highlights the charge that rural schools had been shortchanged prior to that point. In fact, rural people have always had the ability to withhold saying "uncle" in the face of the worst kind of adversity. Here in a public way, Secretary Bell announced what many educators, sociologists and social welfare

workers had known. Resources for rural people are always less than for metropolitan people on a per capita basis. Janet Ayres of Purdue University describes that:

> In 1985, per capita federal expenditures for all functions were $3192 in urban counties and $2478 in rural counties, 22 percent less. The issue of disparity which places rural communities at a disadvantage should be addressed at the federal level. States should also consider their policies and funding allocations for similar differences. (Options:49)

In a decade of conservative, no tax increase politics, it is difficult to develop resources in small and rural communities that have not yet, nor may ever, recover from the economic downturn of the late 1970's. We are in the process of creating a rural welfare state much in the same way as we have created welfare-dependent inner cities. Inequities in education funding across the nation's schools have resulted in a pall being cast over the majority of young people in rural areas.

In many cases, the work ethic of the rural people far exceeded that of their urban counterparts.

The economy of rural areas in the middle of the 20th century was one of increasing agricultural mechanization. Surplus population, with a need for both full time and supplementary jobs, were absorbed by factories placed in rural and semi-rural areas. In many cases, the work ethic of the rural people far exceeded that of their urban counterparts. However, those factories were removed by their absentee landlords to foreign countries. The robotization of industry has reduced the need for semi-skilled workers. The location of high tech industries

to metro centers has laid waste the rural worker's ability to supplement farm income or to make a living.

As we approach the 21st century, the overwhelming number of jobs will require training beyond secondary education. Yet, the percent of rural youngsters going on to post-secondary education is far below that of metropolitan students. In all rural sections of the country, where unemployment and underemployment is high, programs for the preparation of students for a changing economy are almost non-existent. What comes out the other end of our educational system are bright youngsters who leave our rural areas for further schooling never to return, those who go to metropolitan areas to find "better" jobs, those who remain to fill the jobs available and increasing numbers of people on the welfare roles. Is it then any surprise that rural people have great difficulty with their self-worth?

In a 1983 study, Murray et al surveyed high school juniors in a rural portion of North Central Pennsylvania and Western New York State. The surveys dealt with the future goals of the youngsters - their educational and occupational plans, their expectations and the projected size of the community in which they would want to live. Other variables related to family situations and extra-curricular activities. Forty-four percent of the students expressed a desire to live in more metropolitan areas. The expressed cause of moving to a more urban setting was a wider range of vocational opportunities. Sadly, of those surveyed, it was the youngsters with a more future-based orientation, those who were involved with extra-curricular activities, who were planning to leave.

If it is true that the more adventurous, risk-taking youth generally leave rural areas to ply their trades else-

where, what effect does this have on the communities? A conclusion of Murray's study might be that rural communities are less able to deal with the increasing problems of stress on rural inhabitants who may not be able to cope with the limited opportunities. This stress results in an increasing series of social problems that cannot be handled by the underfunded social service and mental health agencies that exist in small numbers in rural communities. Where once the more egregious social ills were restricted to metropolitan areas, increasing child abuse, divorce, psychopathology, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse now rival urban figures and in some states (on a per capita basis) are higher.

At-risk children, whether latchkey, abused, genetically dysfunctional or socially and emotionally disturbed, enter rural schools in increasing numbers. The ability of the infrastructure to deal with these problems is always dependent on the resources of the communities.

In an effort to disclose why rural education is at a low point in its history, demographers and school finance people will tell you that sparsely populated school districts, mostly rural, are unwilling to spend funds for education. Equalization formulae in many states provide large portions of educational funding for poorer and rural school districts. In almost all states where this is done, there continues to be a large disparity in expenditures per child between metropolitan and rural districts. However, many of their funding schemes and the ability to raise local taxes are based on a mythical value of land.

Land as a measure of wealth has been a standard of value since the dawn of civilization. Despite the differences in cultures and economic systems, human beings

tend to compare themselves to each other on a territorial standard. In modern times, land (a physical description) or more accurately "real estate" (definition by economics) is used as a taxable base for governmental activities. However, in recent times, the value of land has not been the only measure of a society or individual's wealth. If land were the only value, a country like Japan or England would not survive. Brazil and India would be superpowers. The measures of wealth have gone far beyond land, to economic and business concepts that defy common logic.

Taxation, and therefore school funding, can only be equitable when there is an equal tax base.

In our current world, real estate may not be the true standard of wealth. Real estate must be converted into a liquid asset before it can be used to good advantage. A large number of vacant homes and factories in a community decreases the demand for properties, and this frequently causes a reduction in assessed value. Consequently there is little equality in the tax base between the haves and have-nots. Inflated market values of farm properties cannot withstand closer scrutiny when their sometimes foreign or outside owners hold onto them for long periods of time. Taxation, and therefore school funding, can only be equitable when there is an equal tax base. This condition does not apply to comparisons between rural and urban real estate.

Tax effort can only be judged accurately when there is equality of wealth and resources. According to

Senier in his *Equity in Financing Basic Education :*

> If the more basic needs have not been satisfied to a maintenance level, the perceived need for educational services will be low. By contrast, if other needs are at or above maintenance levels, the demand for education services increases. Given the first instance, Wise (1976) argues, low expenditures are prima facie evidence for education injury. From a local perspective, it is the allocation of scarce resources to satisfy the demand for more basic needs. By contrast, according to the principle of diminishing marginal utility, as income rises, the personal utility of the added income decreases and the fiscal capacity of its community increases progressively. If both situations occur in a state, the variance in expenditures for education can be large. The New Jersey Supreme Court (Robinson v. Cahill 1973) held that such a situation indicates inequity.
>
> (Senier:4)

A more substantial measure of a community's economic worth–one that can be determined accurately every year–is "personal income." Since all states keep accurate data on this subject, totals can easily be derived for each school district in a state. The total of each school district's earnings from all sources represents the current and liquid assets of the inhabitants, rather than an anticipated conversion of real estate into an artificial dollar amount. In many economically depressed areas, a great number of properties cannot be liquidated.

The obvious conclusion from Senier and others is that wealthy communities spend more money per child on education than do poor communities. Since rural communities tend to be poorer than metropolitan communities, the expenditures for education in rural areas are often significantly less than urban areas. Despite equalization measures across the country, these statements remain true. Since there appears to be a correlation between wealth and post secondary schooling and academic achievement, rural schools are caught in a downward spiral that ever diminishes their ability to help themselves.

Resources and Resurrection

National Goals

How long can our country wait to begin what must become a rural Marshall Plan? The explication of the problems in the initial sections of this paper, echoed by a myriad of thoughtful observers, would lead one to believe that the time is now and probably a decade later than should have been. Beyond what appear to be insurmountable problems, rural people are independent enough to believe that they can, if given the opportunities, succeed in turning things around.

The needs in rural areas are national in scope and therefore require national solutions. The beginning of an improvement in rural life must have the full support of public and private enterprise. Unless remediation efforts are on a large scale, impetus to continue will be short-lived. Because of the political nature of the disbursement of federal resources, local congressmen and U.S. Senators should be encouraged **to join and become active in congressional rural organizations.** The wisdom of membership in these organizations will be obvious in matters of information dissemination on rural subjects and block voting that crosses party lines.

Quite often rural legislators fall prey to the belief that "good" legislation is, by nature, good for everyone. They may not be aware that when applied to their local

constituency this legislation might have negative effects. One example of such a quandary is the proposals relating to day care centers. In metropolitan areas, because of proximity and availability of resources and infrastructure, day care is normally an agency function gathering large groups of youngsters in one place. Even private providers, whether large businesses or individual entrepreneurs, tend to serve larger groups of children in a centralized location. Rural areas tend to provide day care using individual people or family members as the custodian of the children. Because of the lack of facilities, lack of transportation and a lack of resources, working mothers and fathers see their own families or those they trust as providers of choice. Initial drafts of the federal day care legislation excluded possible payment to either family members or individual people. A more expansive rural congressional caucus might have influenced initial legislation to be more even-handed in its approach to rural areas.

A more structured set of public utterances is needed to sustain interest in rural problems.

The need for a public highlighting of the plight of rural people is appropriate and continual. An article on the front page of the Wall Street Journal on August 4, 1988 captured the essence of rural problems. *Small-Town America Battles a Deep Gloom as its Economy Sinks, People Flee as Jobs Disappear, Off Farms as Well as On: A Parent's Plea: Leave Home* (Wall Street Journal:1). As with the most garish of news, it was a one day affair that appeared to be forgotten by the public soon after. A more structured set of public utterances is needed to sustain interest in rural problems. As with the Commission on Excellence, the President should appoint a **Blue Ribbon**

Committee on a national level to study the problems of rural America. The members of this committee should be carefully chosen to avoid a metropolitan bent to its conclusions. The results of this report should be used as a blueprint for federal rural policy well into the 21st century.

A result of the conclusions of this panel might be to identify **prototype regions** in the United States and marshall the forces of government and industry to solve problems there. Rather than apply a group solution to a heterogenous rural population, individual prototypes could differ based on economic, social, and infrastructure needs. Some rural areas may suffer from lack of resources because of conditions relating to a diminution of their natural resource base, while others have seen a depletion of farm activity. To view the entirety of rural America as a homogenous grouping of people would once again do a disservice to us all.

To affect this suggestion, the following components should be part of the plan:

1. Choose a rural county or a set of rural counties based on a predetermined set of demographics.

2. Provide the area with a priority status for all government programs
    a. Funding for Economic Development
    b. Educational and Vocational Monies
    c. Road and Bridge Funding
    d. Social Service Monies
    e. Water & Sewage Funds

3. Provide one liaison person within the government to act as ombudsman for the area.

4. Provide tax credits for companies investing in the area - either start-up or expansion.

5. Establish foreign trade or enterprise zones in the area.

6. Encourage municipalities to cooperate with each other by providing monetary incentives.

7. Encourage county governments to work together to provide joint services. (Hillman: 9)

There is a need for a continued focus on rural problems and solutions must reside in one agency. While there is an executive branch for urban development, there is no coherent agency for rural activity. Rural programs are spread among four or five cabinet positions. The establishment of **a cabinet level post** for rural affairs would be both a recognition of rural people as a distinct population group with separate needs, and an elevation of rurality on the national priority list. The policies developed could be funneled into direct programs for rural areas. All too often "While some say we need a new rural policy, I am unsure that we have ever developed any rural policy as a nation. History seems to show that rural America has more often been a political football in a basketball game." (Braaten: 275)

On an individual state level, and on a somewhat limited national level, there have been programs to encourage teachers and others to reside and work in hard pressed rural and urban areas. The establishment of a **National Scholarship Program** for teachers to teach in rural areas would give credence to any rural policy devel-

opment. Rural students must have access to the most current educational advantages. Further, there must be the kind of commitment from these teachers that will encourage them to remain in rural areas for 3-5 years. We cannot produce programs that will use scholarship money as a carrot and provide little support for the teacher to stay in a rural area. Training methods for rural teachers must focus on the needs of small and rural schools. Teacher internships and student teaching experiences should match the needs of rural schools, rather than the imposition of metropolitan models on rural schools. Quite often the training of teachers is aimed at "the best scenario possible" premise, which certainly excludes many small and rural schools. In its Interim Status Report on the Condition of Education in the Region's Small, Rural Schools (1988) the Northwest Educational Laboratory indicated that:

> The true nature of the problems in the region's small, rural schools results from the interaction between rural school context, on the one hand, and the specific educational needs which they encounter. Size, rurality, isolation and socio-economic factors constrain the small and rural school's ability to solve some special education needs.
>
> (Options:184)

Kohl explains that rural teachers will encounter specific needs that are in some ways similar to other locales, but are higher on rural priority needs. He lists: day-care to allow rural parents to work or go to school, additional personal and vocational counseling, needs of handicapped rural adults, special needs of rural minorities with limited English-speaking youngsters, and professional opportunities (distance), as items on a teacher's "things to know."

While at the same time developing teaching programs targeted for rural areas, our great universities should be encouraged to help with their problems. **Research grants** equal to those given the sciences in the 1960's could be used as an incentive for researchers to devote their energies to rural direction. All too often, metropolitan areas have the resources and people to develop programs for their own areas. Rural schools, with fewer people and resources, cannot hope to compete, by sheer volume, with metropolitan schools. Graduate schools in most areas seek out funding for programs that attend to needs in metro areas. Large foundations and grant distributors in populous areas have strictures that preclude offering funds to rural areas. Governmental programs generally do not have rural components, other than the few that are specifically labeled rural. Rural programs currently operating at universities should be greatly expanded to provide solid outreach to rural areas that would combine teacher training, community mental health and economic development. These three are inextricably woven together in rural communities.

Rural schools, with fewer people and resources, cannot hope to compete, by sheer volume, with metropolitan schools.

Gather all the **captains of industry** together, as President Bush has done with the Governors on the education issue– bankers, corporate executives, investment brokers, et al and have them listen to the advantages of investing in rural America, rather than in overseas activities. There is a track record of work ethic and investment payback in rural areas that exceeds the billions of dollars lost by the financial houses in loans to foreign countries.

Certainly banking institutions are free to invest in any way they choose, but is it not contradictory to treat our own rural areas as "banana republics," removing natural resources, allowing the welfare mentality to bloom and poverty to flourish? Capital must be made available to rural areas to provide them with the impetus to resurrect themselves.

...but is it not contradictory to treat our own rural areas as "banana republics", removing natural resources, allowing the welfare mentality to bloom and poverty to flourish?

Because of the profound changes in rural communities over the past 20 years, leadership in rural communities has changed dramatically. "These structural changes are developing at a time when the experienced power structure leaders in many rural communities have retired or been decimated by the farm crisis and its impact. The result has been a leadership void in many rural communities. Therefore, there is a need for a new generation of leaders with the decision-making capacity and expertise to fill the voids where they exist." (Otto:53) The lack of leadership Otto refers to relates to rural farm communities. The situation is similar to many rural areas in the United States. The economic disruption of rural places and its concomitant exodus of talented young people to metropolitan areas has left a generational void in leadership. One-industry towns have been allowed to lie fallow because of the departure of their major industry. To further complicate matters, education and wide ranging experiences are necessary to enter a leadership role. Training in the economic and educational fields has become a mandate for successful enterprise. It will not be the

outsider, expert or bureaucrat, who will create lasting change. Rural people are adamant about local control and local leadership.

To avoid the "outsider" syndrome create a **national rural leadership center** to help train rural inhabitants in the ways of success. Such programs already exist on a statewide level in a number of universities in our county. One such is the RULE program in Pennsylvania at Penn State. School leadership programs at the University of Vermont, the Far West Laboratory in San Francisco, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the American Association of School Administrators are currently in the process of, or have already developed training and assessment components. A national program should synthesize and disseminate the results of studies that have been done on the characteristics of successful leadership. The results of these studies are generally similar in a number of aspects. Successful leaders tend to reflect the values of the local communities in which they serve. Because of this factor, leaders tend to understand how the community's social structures operate. Leaders with high expectations are more likely to operate successfully than others. Leaders also are cognizant that all efforts to change are intensely human and require collaborative action. These changes are often viewed as political activity. (Meyers: 63)

Successful leaders tend to reflect the values of the local communities in which they serve.

The contrast between urban and rural leadership activities must be part of any training program. Turner and Stephens point out that a lack of research on rural educa-

tion stems from the "lack of appreciation for the demonstrable differences between rural and urban schools." (Stephens & Turner: 83) Innovation in rural areas comes slowly because of lack of resources, historical philosophies of slow change, lack of partnership activities between business and education, geographic distances and the size of enterprise. Once there is a recognition of these differences, long term solutions can be found and implemented. The push for rapid change is doomed to failure. Frustration over the pace of change is one of the most devastating aspects of leadership activities in rural areas. Further, where the isolation of leaders in a rural community is combined with the other artifacts of rural life, leadership is often a lonely activity.

> Many of the decisions I made were lonely ones. I didn't have the resources I needed at my fingertips, like I have now. One aspect that makes it lonely is that you don't have colleagues nearby. You can't call up someone for lunch to discuss problems with. But the loneliest moments would be when I was driving around these country roads at 5 a.m. in the morning in a snowstorm trying to decide if the buses should start rolling at 6 a.m. You're the only guy in the whole place who can make the decision. Unless it's a total blizzard, whatever you decide is wrong. If you go into the coffee shop later that morning and there are ten farmers sitting there, five will say you did right and five will wonder what was in your head. *Bert Hagemann, Superintendent Brookfield, Illinois School District #95* (Stephens & Turner: 71)

State Goals

Statewide action for rural people is only possible when networks are created among a cross section of rural people. Educators, legislators, bureaucrats, farmers and professionals must be gathered in coalitions to work for rural people. Problem identification and problem solving must happen on a statewide basis, while at the same time individual efforts must go on locally. If public disclosure is not made of rural concerns at a statewide level, it will be impossible for local people to access the kind of help that they might need to solve their own problems. We must nurture the independence of rural people, while at the same time be ready to help when called upon. Trust will be a logical consequence (we are not alone) when rural people act in a concerted manner. While national goals are of great value, statewide activity will speed the abilities of communities to lift themselves out of their torpor. Give local leadership a peg to hang their hats on and watch initiative take place.

One of the first steps in statewide efforts might be the development of **entrepreneurship programs**. Very often geographic, economic and sociological factors have conspired to deprive rural constituents of the entrepreneurial skills necessary to succeed. Since small businesses have created most jobs over the past 15 years, these skills are mandatory. During the 12 month period ending September 1983, the number of jobs in small business dominated industries increased 1.6%, about twice the rate of large businesses. Small business income in 1983 increased by 18% over 1982. In that same time period, wages and salary income rose by only 6.1%. According

to Peter Drucker, from 1950 to 1970 the growth dynamics of America's economy lay in established institutions, but since 1970 and especially since 1979, these dynamics have moved to the entrepreneurial sector. Entrepreneurs start their businesses where they live. We need to create a climate whereby we can nurture those kind of people. The goal of entrepreneurship education is to establish the value of small business to the nation. This kind of education process could take place in local communities, local schools, both comprehensive and vocational, universities, or even at the courthouse.

In approximately 35 states, regional educational agencies serve the needs of the rural and sparsely populated areas. The concept of **regional cooperation** has long been the dream of those who believe that rural areas can thrive. In general, combinations of school districts or state established organizations, generally called Regional Educational Service Agencies, provide the link between local communities and state educational agencies. It is these cooperatives, locally funded, state funded, or pay as you go, that provide for locally driven needs, and provide programs unavailable to individual districts because of a lack of resources. In many instances, these cooperatives serve to be cost cutting activities. Generally, resources for regional cooperation are a combination of state and local funds.

Programs are as varied as the communities they serve. Across our country, these systems range from well developed programs such as the BOCES in New York State to the Intermediate organizations in Louisiana promulgated in 1987 with a total of six employees across the state. Services are generally divided into direct school services, management services, instructional materials

services, cooperative purchasing, business administration services and special education. The scope of each set of services is broad. A listing of direct services might include planned course development, technical assistance, instructional improvement, school evaluation, cooperative staff development, teacher induction, research, continuing professional development, drug education, human development, AIDS education, vocational training, sex equity, artist-in-residence, guidance, teen parenting and a host of other items.

The advantage of regionalism, in a political way, is that these cooperatives quite often act as a liaison to state agencies and state governments. They may act as lobbyists for their constituents, while at the same time bringing back information on the most current of happenings in the state house or national government.

Very often cost savings can be affected in cooperative purchasing that might save local taxpayers and schools precious tax dollars that could go into instructional usage. Just recently, bulk purchasing of natural gas and electricity has gained huge savings for local districts across the country. Novel approaches to this kind of buying have expanded dramatically over the past 15 years. States with limited regional approaches should seek ways to spur the growth of these formal and informal cooperatives.

A nationwide trend that will become a normal part of schooling over the next few years is the concept of **preschool.** Because of the dramatic change in the American family, both federal and state governments have seen a need for large scale programs to enter youngsters into school situations at ages 3 to 5, with social service agencies

involvement at an even younger age. All of these programs, in conjunction with day care programming, could be a significant advancement for rural people.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census tells us that in 1980 non-metro populations had higher proportions of people in poverty and that children in households with female heads of households, with no spouse present, represented 58% of the people in the poverty class. With local providers of services, because of the rural consequence, these children go unattended or misattended until it becomes impossible to deal with the host of problems these statistics present.

Matthew is currently 18. He has been a client in three separate human service programs since he was 12. Matthew came into contact with the county Child Welfare Agency as a result of physical and emotional neglect by his mother. After referral, Matthew remained with his mother and received no services because the Mental Health Agency determined the mother to be a fit parent. The mother was referred for further mental health treatment, but did not have adequate transportation to reach the provider of the service. Consequently, she received no treatment. At 14 Matthew was physically abused by his mother and suffered a broken arm. Since Matthew's mother said he abused drugs, the Child Welfare Agency referred Matthew to the Drug and Alcohol Agency. However, Matthew never received the treatment services, due to lack of transportation. The Drug and Alcohol Agency did not contact the Child Welfare Agency to let them know that Matthew did not come in for his scheduled treat-

ment. At 15, Matthew was arrested for shoplifting and referred to juvenile court. After several court appearances for similar offenses, he was committed to a residential facility for delinquent youth. Upon his release at age 17, he again was referred to the Child Welfare Agency because his mother abused him. At this time, both mother and son admitted to heavy drug use. Matthew was referred to the Drug and Alcohol Agency and attended scheduled sessions sporadically. Now, at age 18, Matthew is in a hospital recuperating from a suicide attempt. (Choices: 18, 19)

This is but one of the stories of human suffering brought on by "placism." Can the development of preschool and day care programming in rural areas remediate these problems? Had the mother of this youngster come in contact with a preschool program would things have turned out any differently? If the economic conditions could have been remedied, would that family have had transportation to get to counseling? Would a preschool professional have been able to see the beginnings of abuse and directed the family to the proper agencies? The answers to these questions might not all be positive, but any action might have reduced the odds that the story above would have come to such a negative conclusion. In a rural area, the identification of problems, whether emotional or physical, can lead to the "normalization" of youngsters by the time they become regular school age. This advantage is generally afforded to metropolitan families, but not to rural people. If pre-school and day care programs expand as predicted, the inevitable dropping out of rural girls at age 16 to 17, leaving school for a life of deprivation, poverty and food stamps might be halted. Further, prospective second and third children of these

circumstances would have a shot at successful lives.

As the disparity grows between rural and urban areas in resources and economic development, the disparity in school funding grows.

Equalization of school resources within states is becoming a constitutional issue. As the disparity grows between rural and urban areas in resources and economic development, the disparity in school funding grows. Local school districts are able to spend local dollars per child based on their economy. Equalization formulas, now in place, may have to be challenged constitutionally at some point to achieve the original goals of the Serrano case. Recently, courts in West Virginia, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Kentucky, Texas and Colorado have looked seriously at the questions of equity for youngsters in various school districts. The claims have always been that there is an inequitable distribution of resources across the state and that poor people (and in many cases, rural people) have been denied equal educational opportunity. The cases thus far have denied the claims that poor people, as a class, have been discriminated against. Lack of proper local taxation cannot be used, according to the courts, to substantiate unequal education.

It is apparent then, that disparities within states must be settled in a courtroom. The Rodriguez case stands as the current barrier to any amelioration of school finance reform on a federal level. With its pronouncement that education is not an inalienable right guaranteed by the federal constitution, poor people are not disadvantaged by inequities under the 14th Amendment's equal protection

clause. So, while state constitutions might have thorough and efficient, or thorough and uniform mandates for state funded programs, disparities do not disadvantage poor people "as a class", therefore no remediation is possible.

The Rodriguez case occurred in 1973, when disparities sometimes were 50% to 100% between wealthy and poor districts. The disparities today have grown to 200% and 300% in some states. What education outcomes would you predict in a school district that spends $7000 per student compared to one that spends $1900 per student? The answer to that question will have to be developed by statistical research and pronounced by a Supreme Court. The growing disparity shows itself in lower teacher salaries, fewer programs, fewer resources and fewer opportunities for rural youngsters.

State goals must work in conformity with the **research on effective rural schools**. In a full blown attempt at blocking the baby from being thrown out with the bathwater, state programs must emphasize what successful rural schools look like. According to the *Journalism Research Fellowship Report of the National School Public Relations Association*, the characteristics of successful rural schools are these:

*Effective rural schools assess community social dynamics to develop "grass roots efforts" for approaching learning.

*Rural school issues are community issues.

*Rural schools maintain total immersion in the community.

*Rural school curriculum, while emphasizing the academics, provides skills, attitudes, and understanding for a real world.

*Rural schools maintain effective career education and work study programs.

*After-school activities (sewing, choir, football) are often conducted by members of the community.

*Effective rural secondary schools encourage adults to attend classes.

*Students work together, with older students helping younger ones (particularly in elementary schools).

*Effective rural schools take advantage of their setting and maintain environmental education programs.

*Effective rural school districts work together, pooling resources from a central location (e.g., intermediate units, computer centers, public television), and tend to share specialized staff.

*Effective rural schools maintain a strict discipline code.

*Staff in effective rural schools tend to live in and be a part of the community.

*Effective rural schools provide ongoing staff development and growth.

Rather than reinventing the wheel, statewide efforts should be instituted that play to the strengths of rural people rather than to their weaknesses. In developing such things as improvement of staff development programs, look at the size of rural schools for individualizing programs rather than bemoaning the fact that one can't get 1500 teachers or administrators in one room. Why not bring the gospel to rural schools as individuals, rather than having everyone travel to the state capital and spend large amounts of funds on travel expenditures? Regional or local meetings could be established across a state to accommodate a more in-depth program. Examples of these "central office"philosophies are a bane to leaders in rural areas.

The most current of solutions to a lack of educational resources in rural schools has been the establishment of the concept of **distance education**. The advantage of distance education is that it provides otherwise inaccessible courses to students in rural areas. Not only can these courses be transmitted from district to district, but, also within large consolidated districts, from school to school. Universities are particularly active in these areas using large remote audiences to beam down lectures (live or videotape) to remote sites and in some cases interactively with limited questioning from students. Further advancement in satellite and microwave technology will even further enhance these possibilities.

In a recent distance education project called "teleteaching" across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, classes were transmitted to fifty-two sites providing courses unavailable to local schools. In at least two cases, courses were taught over thousands of miles, from Utah

and from Juarez, Mexico. The needs for these courses are exceptional. In almost all the cases the students were unable to get either advanced or remedial courses at their own schools. An evaluation of the project by Research for Better Schools (Mid Atlantic Lab) concluded that "The Teleteaching Project represents a promising infusion of technology into the educational process. Its rapidly expanding applications within local schools are demonstrating that it is a feasible, practical and cost-effective approach to distance learning. It has received a generally favorable reception by administrators, teachers, and students involved in its implementation and has shown the potential to engender student performance at levels comparable to traditional modes of instruction."

Results have been positive. Students at remote sites have done as well, and in a number of cases, surpassed the test results of those at the live sites. The key to the future of any distance education project will be its cost utility benefit. At this time, the need for cheaper technology is in a race with the need for expansion of such programs.

...school-based enterprise...to teach entrepreneurial skills to rural students who might then develop their own business and create new jobs in rural areas.

The development of the concept of **school-based enterprise** began in the 1970's with Jonathan Sher. The original philosophy was to teach entrepreneurial skills to rural students who might then develop their own businesses and create new jobs in rural areas. The idea spurred national interest and spawned projects in North Carolina

and other states. The avowed goals of the program were defined as:

* Helping rural schools become effective small business incubators.

* Help participants develop competence in entrepreneurship and business management.

* Help create good new jobs through finding and exploring untapped opportunities.

* Foster improvement and the capacity to be successful, productive community members.

**Excerpted from North Carolina Rural School-Based Enterprise program evaluation.*

What do you need to begin such a program? You need commitment from school boards, administrators and teaching staff, funding from private or public sources and a desire for this to happen. The steps involve curricular materials that deal with all aspects of business planning, feasibility studies, needs assessment, marketing and sales. Who will teach these concepts, who will fund, who will run the business and a host of other concerns are all yours if you begin the project. The most public of these projects was the "Way Off Broadway Deli" on Route 95 (Exit 31) near Fayetteville, North Carolina.

The preceeding examples of rural success stories have two concepts in common. Both are cooperative in nature and stem from a **for us, by us** mentality. The de-

velopment of these projects came from a local desire to improve local conditions using local resources and talent, regional cooperatives and finally, private or public endowment. The intense work to achieve the goals of rural educational and economic improvement must accommodate the needs of local people. To achieve these goals, the following **personal directions** should be reviewed:

* Familiarize yourself with the research on small school advantages.

* Support rural legislative initiatives.

* Inform your legislators of your views.

* Become involved with statewide or national rural groups.

* Support higher education initiatives for rural kids.

* Support or help to develop teacher training programs geared to rural children.

* Take a hard look at rural school curricula.

* Help to raise local community expectations.

* Involve yourself in local economic development activities.

If the solutions appear to be so widespread and the problems insurmountable, you have achieved the first rung on the ladder of personal awareness of what is wrong and what must be done. Individual success stories in rural communities dot the map of our country. Initiators must now look to those successes for replication.

The Road to Community Mental Health

Behind the massive doors of academia, rural psychologists, that intrepid band of truth seekers and outreach workers, contemplate a disastrous thesis. Privately they weigh the possibility that whole rural communities suffer from clinical depression. Is it possible that the fabric of some communities is so distressed that the unraveling of the inhabitants is taking place before our very eyes? The doxology from on high might disclaim the possibilities of whole communities existing under uniform stress conditions, but the situation does exist. "Although there is always danger in overgeneralizing, it can be observed that rural residents experience significant stresses that effect their well being and put them at risk for certain types of psychopathology" (Murray, et al: 77).

The combination of local misfortune and a national disregard for the fate of whole segments of our population affect the self-worth of entire communities.

The stresses identified by Murray and his colleagues are those that have already been identified in this paper–isolation, lack of economic resources, limited vocational opportunities, changes in the social structure of the communities and even weather conditions that might effect farm production. Knutson, Pulver and Wilkinson (Options: 289) refer to the "severe depression" of those people who have been dislocated as a result of the farm crisis as their reason for including counseling as a compo-

nent of training programs. The combination of local misfortune and a national disregard for the fate of whole segments of our population affect the self-worth of entire communities.

The corollary to these depressed communities can be observed when one has lived in a community long enough to have gone through economic and psychological down times to a more positive state. The increase in social problems endemic in maudlin rural communities–child abuse, substance abuse, poverty, mental aberration, teen-aged pregnancies–slows down perceptibly when hope arrives in the form of economic improvement. When opportunities present themselves to communities, the question is will they begin to accept improvement or dwell on past failure? The blueprints for success must be presented community-wide so that consensus will move everyone forward.

The era of "smokestack chasing" and large scale industry moving to rural areas has come to an end.

The era of "smokestack chasing" and large scale industry moving to rural areas has come to an end. The more successful areas are those that are developing small businesses and creating jobs in small groups, attracting tourists, and serving as bedroom communities for urban areas, the elderly and the retired. These may be temporary solutions, but a future with an aging population, no technological industry, sporadic tourism and a decaying infrastructure will not survive the next economic downturn. If the race to metropolitan areas continues, the burden on urban areas will become too great for them to bear. Homegrown solutions must include the retention of youth

and the development of leadership. While battling on the national and state level, local people must act now to preserve their positive heritage and develop new resources.

One of the most provincial "by us and for us" solutions is the regeneration of the local economic base. Concentrate efforts on expanding local businesses by encouraging small expansions. Encourage local businesses to buy locally (thus avoiding costly transportation charges). Search out products that are needed locally and establish businesses to produce them. An example of this kind of thinking occurred when a local mobile home manufacturer looked at the components of his products and noticed that all the components came from an average of 250 miles away. In concert with community leadership, a local manufacturer of trusses for the mobile homes was established. After 3 years, this company is producing all the trusses for local mobile homes, employs 50 people, has $4 million in sales and is expanding its line to other wood products.

This is but one example of a home grown solution that will become an indigenous industry that buys and sells locally, hires locally, and now has need for managerial talent that could be secured locally. The newest concept being developed by this industry will be a day care center, physically designed as a combination of mobile homes, established by community leaders in concert with the local social service agencies and regional educational service agencies. Their successes appear to build on one another for the advancement of every segment of rural society. In one sense, the advantages of smallness and rural networking make this an easier task than one might find in a metropolitan area. We must build

and play to our strengths.

When rural people have control over their resources and are able to make local decisions based on perceived needs, they can be successful. When national and statewide programs conspire to reduce opportunities for rural people, local self-help programs decline, as does local self-worth and esteem. As mental health and other programs affected by cost-containment policies of federal and state agencies suffer, rural areas suffer by larger measures. Where were all the political outcries when the national Health Service Corps, largely a rural agency, declined from 2595 to 1401 placements from 1988 to 1989 and to 800 in 1990, when the needs were growing in rural areas? What will occur when infant mortality and rural disease increase dramatically over the next few years? How will the already meager mental health system in rural areas cope with an increase in clients when the system's resources decline to a level that becomes unmanageable? The dismantling of rural-turned agencies will increase governmental liability in other programs truly creating the rural welfare state that we should be so eager to avoid.

In 1986, the County of Nottinghamshire in England came under a political regime that believed that schools could become the common intake point for all human services. In an almost sweeping manner, all welfare, senior citizen, preschool, and health services were made part of a community center for social service delivery. Even the member of parliament moved his office to the school building. The broadening of the school's function is something that could be accomplished under our present system. The redundancy of our efforts relating to children and youth services, welfare, adult training and a host of others could be abated by using buildings that are currently occupied for only 8 hours a day

for the most part and 180 plus days during the year.

The transportation facility, libraries, physical education facilities, early childhood education, etc. could all be part of an opening of the school's resources to its communities. Not that there are no projects of this kind going on already, but this would be a broadening of these activities across rural America. There are already historically close ties between schools and agricultural enterprise. Vocational agricultural programs have always been school based, as have Future Farmers of America activities. The results of these community-school partnerships have a successful track record of over one hundred years.

Whether dealing with at-risk youth or school-based enterprise, there will always be problems of turf.

The course of common intake, community-school collaboration, business-education partnerships travels an initial stretch over a rocky road. Whether dealing with at-risk youth or school-based enterprise, there will always be problems of turf. The overriding factor, however, in any amelioration of the problems of rural people, is the objective of a rural renaissance, a redemption of the self-worth of people and successful enterprise. There are so few resources in rural areas, that turf problems should be a laughing matter, rather than a cause for concern.

Examples of successful community driven educational programs are:

* School-based enterprise

* Rural teacher exchange programs with universities

* Rural leadership training programs

* Programs aimed at parents' views of post-secondary education

* Consolidated youth services between agencies aimed at at-risk students

* Vocational and adult programs with outreach capabilities

* Outreach literacy programs

* Single parent homemaker programs

* Business/education partnership programs

* Local scholarship programs for rural students

* Small business outreach programs at universities

* Business development centers for individual entrepreneurs

* Shadow programs for in-school youth using local service organizations

* Integration programs in vocational, vocational rehabilitation and special education

* Programs that expand the role of teachers so

that flexibility is attained

* Programs that allow rural people to view cultural events first hand - (Artist in Residence as an example)

* Scholarships and loan forgiveness for rural teachers

* Establishment of community colleges or expansion of vocational schools to community colleges

If the above list is not complete, I would appreciate the reader's input.

Regeneration of Rural America must take place in a national spirit of cooperation. It is necessary. It is desirable. It is possible.

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